

# Missing Emma

As we bury our fifth chicken we can't help but feel loss. She was such a pleasure to watch frolicking on her own, catching grasshoppers, eating grapes, scratching in the dirt...

Our backyard hens provide entertainment, companionship, and eggs. We will miss her and regret not knowing what was wrong when she tried to stick it out. While trying to diagnose her ailments once again we were overwhelmed with ideas. We know that doing an autopsy is one of the best ways to detect what it was although we didn't do one. Some of her symptoms were decreased coloring in her wattle and comb, as well as inflammation in her comb. This could be linked to several things through our research; SHS, vitamin deficiency(though not likely), Merek's(we've lost others to this), but without doing testing we will never know what it was.

This leads us to believe that it is even more important to hatch your own chickens for pasture-raised hens or even have chicks. We had purchased or bartered our chickens when they were 8 weeks old. I still believe that if we would have gotten them younger we could have bypassed a lot of issues that we had to begin with. We've heard that they have less problems when they are pinned up because there are so many things that can work against them in the wild. However since we lost all four of our naked necks we think that there was a correlation to that lineage even though we were told that they were the most disease tolerant. Experience in our case has been some of the hardest lessons to learn as we hone skills in homesteading. We can't help but get discouraged.